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FREIGHT HANDLING AT SOVIET PORTS LAGS  
IN SPITE OF NEW PORT EQUIPMENT

Moscow, Rechnoy Transport, 17 Jul 51

From 1940 to 1950, the number of machines utilized for loading and unloading operations in river ports increased 88 percent. The number of cranes used increased 3.8 times, floating cranes six times. The main machine types were produced by plants and shops of the Ministry of River Fleet. Loading and unloading operations were 80.3 percent mechanized in 1950, as against 46.4 percent in 1940. Labor requirements dropped 37 percent since 1940, and the average production per worker increased 172 percent. Productivity of loading and unloading operations increased 1.5 times in this period.

However, these improvements have not kept up with increased demands. The ports and wharves are not keeping up with the additional burdens imposed on them by the new hydroelectric and irrigation construction projects. One of the reasons for this is that port construction is lagging behind shipbuilding. During the postwar Five-Year Plan, the tugboat fleet was increased 25 percent, dry cargo nonself-propelled vessels 32 percent, and dry cargo self-propelled vessels 4.6 times. In this period, wharf areas were not extended very much.

Supplier ministries have not modernized their wharves, and, in 1947, 60 percent of the wharves of the economic ministries which do most of the river shipping were not mechanized.

The lack of modern ports and wharves has imposed an additional burden on the railroads. For example, hundreds of thousands of tons of lumber are shipped by rail from the northern parts of the eastern USSR to the southern part of the country (Donbass, Caucasus), while many Volga ships travel empty in that direction. The cost of shipping lumber in this way is much higher than it would be by river transport. For example, it is estimated that the cost of shipping one ton of lumber from Kotlas to the Transcaucasus is about 126 rubles, while by mixed river and rail transport it would cost 105 rubles. Shipping lumber from

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Arkhangel'sk to the Transcaucasus by mixed rail and water transport would save 24 rubles per ton. In this case, the lumber is transferred from rail to water at Yaroslavl' and back to rail at Astrakhan'. Hauling lumber from Tavda to the Caucasus, with transshipping at Molotov and Stalingrad, would save 39 rubles per ton.

Industrial enterprises frequently use railroad instead of river transport for hauling in fuel and raw materials and for shipping finished products because of the lack of adequate ports and wharves.

Inadequate port and wharf facilities have also been responsible for extended ship layovers. At present, ships are lying idle 30 percent of the operating time in Volga ports, 40 percent in Dnepr ports.

At present, only a little more than 20 percent of the total freight is handled in ports without the use of manual labor.

Moscow, Izvestiya, 27 Sep 51

Forty percent of the plan for hauling Volga River freight is handled by the Stalingrad river region. This river section includes 500 kilometers of the Volga River and supports the most intense freight traffic. Many large ports and wharves, including Stalingrad, Krasnoarmeysk, Vladimirovka, Kamyshin, Dubovka and others, are operating in this section.

The Stalingrad river center is an important transshipping base. Here, mine timbers are transferred from water to railroad transport for the Donbass, and mineral and construction materials are also transshipped.

The Stalingrad river region is lagging behind schedule more than any other of the Volga regions. For 3 months in a row, the Stalingrad Regional Administration of the Volga Freight Ship Line and the Stalingrad Freight and Passenger Port have failed to complete their hauling plans, and in August, the plan of the Stalingrad Regional Administration was completed only 84 percent.

The dispatching service is completely out of hand. Ships are often dispatched empty or only partially loaded, and idle time of ships waiting for port facilities adds up to thousands of hours. Every day, 20-25 barges wait to be unloaded at the port. Information on incoming freight is delayed and often not correct.

Heads of the Freight and Passenger Administration and the Ministry of the River Fleet know that Koz'min, chief of the Stalingrad port, is not capable of running this large Volga port. They have reprimanded him frequently but have not yet replaced him.

Bakhtin, chief of the regional administration, and his deputy spend most of their time at meetings and have little time left to visit the ships and piers. The fate of the plan for hauling freight on the Volga depends, to a large degree, on the Stalingrad Regional Administration. This organization should be aided by the Volga Freight Ship Line and its chief Nikolin. However, heads of the ship line do little but send decrees and circulars; in the last 5 months, more than 2,223 telegrams were received at Stalingrad from this organization. Heads of the ship line do nothing to see that the decrees are carried out.

Representatives of the ship line and of the ministry are constantly in Stalingrad, but their presence does not improve hauling operations at all. Also, Seleznev, chief of the Volga Freight and Passenger Ship Line, Bulatov, deputy chief of the Volga Freight Ship Line, Romashchenko, chief of Glavtsentrflot (Main Administration of River Fleet of Central Basins), and Shashkov, Minister of River Fleet, have all visited Stalingrad this year, but their visits have not improved operations of this region.

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River workers of Stalingrad have not fulfilled their plan for hauling freight for the construction projects and they are particularly behind schedule in supplying sand to the Volga-Don Canal. They are also behind schedule in hauling freight from the right bank of the Volga to the left bank for the hydroelectric construction project. Shashkov did not visit the construction projects to consult with the construction chiefs but simply talked with the chief of "Stalingradgidrostroy" (Organization for the Construction of the Stalingrad Hydroelectric Center) for a short time by telephone. The construction workers did not even know of the arrival of the other chiefs in Stalingrad as the latter avoided contact with the construction chiefs.

Although both the ministry and ship line knew a year ago that the freight flow along the Volga, particularly in the Stalingrad region, would increase considerably, still they did little to prepare for this event. Not until the middle of summer, when the hauling plans were not being fulfilled, was anything done about the matter. The ministry then sent only a few additional ships to handle the work, and these ships proved unsuitable.

Moscow, Rechnoy Transport, 29 Jun 51

Grain of the new harvest will soon be coming into the Krasnoarmeysk port for transshipment. In preparing for these shipments, the Sarepta station is now coordinating its time schedules with river transport schedules. However, to do this, it must first dispose of nearly 60,000 tons of last year's harvest which were still stored by Zagotzerno [Administration for the Procurement of Grain and Other Oleaginous Crops?] in mid-June. Only 500 to 1,200 tons of this grain are shipped per day. Zagotzerno is complaining that the railroad is not furnishing the cars necessary for loading the grain.

One of the two car scales at the Sarepta station is being completely overhauled, thus holding up grain shipments. The station has five instead of the required seven locomotives, and crews are lacking to keep even these in operation. In addition, two switch towers, one at the location and the other on the switching tracks, are needed to prevent accidents and transportation delays.

Grain deliveries by train are still not reported in advance. Frequently, the pier learns about grain shipments after the train loaded with grain has already arrived at the station.

By agreement between the Ministries of Transportation, River Fleet, and Agricultural Procurement, only grain of a single crop and type will be transshipped at the Krasnoarmeysk pier. This requirement is violated systematically as two to four types of grain are received at the same time. The pier has but one grain berth and is able to handle only one kind of grain at a time. As a result, railroad cars accumulate at the station while wharf workers are delayed by having to load vessels with different kinds of grain. As the vessels must carry a single type of grain, they have to make way for other vessels when a different type of grain is to be loaded, even though they have to return to get the rest of their load. The Ministry of Agricultural Procurement must see to it that only one type of grain is sent for transshipment at this pier, and the Ministry of Transportation must strictly control grain transshipments.

Glavtsentrotlot and the Volga Freight Ship Line should be given an exact chart showing the movement of diesel and nonself-propelled vessels so that the grain pier can be kept busy.

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One hundred more port workers are needed to assure transshipment of grain, sand, and coal from the pier.

To mechanize the wharf completely, 10 or 12 new mechanical hoists must be installed as the existing ones have worn out and frequently break down. In addition, the wharf needs four electric motors to replace the old ones when they break down.

Moscow, Rechnoy Transport, 17 Jul 51

The port at Volotov is a very important link in the hauling of dry cargo in the Volga and Kama basins. Its freight handling capacity has been increased 2½ times since 1940, and the port is now 92 percent mechanized. However, the port is still not able to handle the increased demands made upon it. In 1950, the port got the reputation of holding up ships. In May and June 1950, there were usually 15 to 19 ships waiting at anchorage, and many of these vessels were forced to wait a month or more to be handled.

Minsk, Sovetskaya Belorussiya, 10 Jun 51

The new floating pneumatic grain conveyer in use in the south port of Moscow has a capacity of 100 tons of grain per hour.

Baku, Bakinskiy Rabochiy, 28 Jun 51

At Baku there is a three-sided pier to facilitate freight handling. All loading and unloading operations are mechanized. Belt conveyers, automatic loading machines, and crane hoists are used on the wharf.

Moscow, Rechnoy Transport, 14 Sep 51

According to a new system started at the beginning of the 1951 navigation season, all petroleum-carrying vessels have been serviced while under way in the Stalingrad Operational Sector of the Volgatanker Ship Line. Fuel, provisions, technical materials, newspapers, etc. are supplied the vessels without requiring them to layover. All this is done by special auxiliary vessels.

Moscow, Rechnoy Transport, 12 Jun 51

In the south port of Moscow, tests have been completed on a pneumatic floating grain-loading machine. This first model was made in the experimental shops of Glavtsentrotlot. As the machine has a floating base, it can be used at different ports during the navigation season according to demand. The pneumatic loader sucks the grain out of the freighter's hold, cleans it in a special filter, and transfers it directly into railroad cars. The machine, capable of loading 100 tons per hour, operates automatically and, as the loading mechanism is enclosed, dust is not scattered over the dock area. The experimental shops are designing a second pneumatic grain-loading machine and have already fabricated part of this machine.

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Moscow, Morskoy Flot, No 1, Jan 51

Mechanized loading operations at Soviet seaports increased considerably during the postwar Five-Year Plan. The average mechanization level for ports of the Ministry of Maritime Fleet as a whole reached 88 percent in 1950, considerably surpassing the 1940 level of 65.9 percent. Some ports attained an even higher level of mechanization: Odessa 96 percent, Novosibirsk 95 percent, and Zhdanov 95 percent.

In 1950, nearly 6,000 ships were loaded or unloaded by fast methods, thus saving a total of 100,000 hours over existing norms. In the ministry as a whole, 40 percent of all freight was loaded by fast methods in 1950 and, in some ports, this figure reached 50-75 percent. However, in spite of this high degree of mechanization, many of the loading and unloading operations are still done manually, including some aspects of operations which are mainly mechanized.

Ship's holds are still loaded and unloaded primarily by manual methods, and mechanization of this kind of work is being developed very slowly. The same situation exists for loading and unloading railroad cars and warehouses.

For unloading bulk freight such as coal, ore, salt, etc., special-type grab buckets with 6- to 8-meter-wide jaws are used. These "scraper-type" buckets service up to 50 percent of the hold area and unload 60-80 percent of the contents (single deck ships). Three-cubic-meter coal grab buckets are in series production at the Zhdanov plant of the Ministry of Maritime Fleet. In the near future, similar grab buckets of smaller capacity (for coal) must be designed and produced for 5-ton cranes, as well as grab buckets for unloading ore and other bulk freight.

In the first 6 months of 1950, gathering arm coal-loading machines, type S-153, were tested in ship's holds. The results of the tests were very satisfactory. Although the machine was designed for other purposes, it proved versatile enough to be used for this work. This machine will be used in all ports which unload bulk freight from ship's holds.

Many ports (Baku, Makhachkala) use simple unloading (metatelnyy) machines with drum-mounted scoops for unloading grain from ship's holds. These machines can also be used for unloading salt, sand, fine coal, and other bulk freight. They should be put into operation at ports in the near future.

Fork lifts can be used for loading uniform mixed freight into ship's holds. These machines can pile the freight into piles 3-4 meters high. This method is used in Leningrad and Odessa for various kinds of mixed freight. The Leningrad port uses portable duralumin conveyers for smaller mixed freight.

Fork lifts, light portable conveyers, and other machines for mechanized loading and unloading of mixed freight should be generally introduced in a short time.

In addition to the above machines, a "KS" type loader for loading coal, a hold bulldozer, an overhead hold crane, and other machines are now being developed.

Loading and unloading operations on the docks and in the warehouses and storage areas are much easier to mechanize than in the ships themselves. Hundreds of machines such as caterpillar-mounted cranes, truck cranes, fork lifts, electric trucks, small tractors and trailers, etc., are being used in Soviet ports for work on the docks and storage areas. However, these machines are not very efficiently utilized. At many ports these machines are frequently idle or break down after being used on cobblestone or other poorly surfaced pavement. These areas should be asphalted as soon as possible.

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The packaging of mixed freight into larger bundles for handling and storing is helping to make the freight handling more efficient.

Loading and unloading boxcar is a time-consuming process. Although forklifts and truck cranes help to mechanize this work, they do not provide complete mechanization of this work. To solve this problem, small half-ton forklifts which can load the freight inside the cars are being developed. Also, port innovators are developing mechanical shovels and small conveyers to be used in loading and unloading railroad cars.

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